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I am a candidate for Mayor in the upcoming election. For nearly six decades, Concord has been the place I call home.

Growing up, I attended Walker and Kimball Schools as well as St. Peter's before graduating from Bishop Brady High School. A US Navy Veteran, Honorably Discharged, I was associated with the downtown Concord Theatre for 27 years where I had ample opportunity to get to know a real cross section of our rich and vibrant community. I also worked for the Department of Motor Vehicles, Concord Group Insurance and spent more than seven years working at Blue Cross and Blue Shield. Eventually I discovered the satisfaction of working on behalf of others through the non-profit world, and spent more than a decade engaging in that vitally important work.

My love for Concord made the city a very important part of my 2011 book – Was that a Name I Dropped? which topped numerous best-seller lists and has been optioned for a possible dramatization. Should the project come to fruition, I would love nothing more than to have part of it filmed in Concord. I have also written pieces for the Concord Monitor and have been a regular blogger for Concord Patch, winning a NH Press Association Award in December of 2014 as “Best Blog”. In the past 2 ½ years more than 400 people have attended the numerous film classes that I have taught.

From as far back as I can recall, I have savored all of the many fascinating things that made living in Concord a total experience for me. I once noted that you can live in a city or you can “live” in a city. The difference being that by “living” you take a real interest in everything and everybody around you can never be bored and relish every opportunity presented.

While still in grade school I marched myself into the City Hall offices of then Mayor Charles Davie who invited me to sit down and talk about what was on my mind. As I rambled on for fifteen minutes, he didn't crack a smile but maintained eye contact even while jotting down copious notes.

“I think Concord needs a subway”, I announced, offering to help dig the necessary tunnels, something that would have surprised my parents who had all they could do to get me to help with gardening in the yard.

Mayor Davie promised to get back to me and indeed he did. Within two weeks he called to tell me that the cost for such a project would be prohibitive and would probably necessitate, “....raising your parent’s taxes which you surely don’t want.....” and I had to agree. Such a tax increase might lessen the amount of weekly allowance I received, monies that enabled me to frequent Concord’s Main Street where I would shop away almost the entire stipend.

The Mayor thanked me, however, for caring so much about our city and urged me to never stop trying to make a difference. I never forgot that day or the power of a Mayor taking time to listen to someone not even old enough to be a voter. I promised myself that should I ever find myself in a position to listen to others, that I would be ever mindful of the value of what other people think, feel or wish to share.

If I am elected Mayor, I promise to make myself available two or three days a week, for seven or eight hours each day, in order to listen to what the people of Concord have to say. What are their concerns? What are their frustrations? What do they want their city to consider doing that will make their lives better or to make them feel more a part of Concord?

While in our local form of government the Mayor is more of a figurehead or as I noted to someone, “sort of like Queen Elizabeth II but without the crown”, the Mayor can and should be constantly listening to the pulse of the community and all the residents. Through that listening process, direction can be provided to those who are often frustrated with a system that seems more of a maze than something easy to navigate.

The biggest complaint I have heard from scores of people in the last few years is that their opinions are not being listened to by those who make decisions that affect everyone. There is also a widespread notion, whether real or not, that decisions are made behind the scenes and that some only go through the motions of making everything appear transparent.

While this may not be true in all instances, the perception that large number of individuals have leads to voter apathy and low turnout at the polls as well as disinterest from concerned citizens to run for office and attempt to effectuate change.

If elected I promise to remember that you elected me. Your opinions, concerns and suggestions are always worth listening to and making a valued part of all discussions. I promise to help to return a voice to the people!

Concord is a vastly different community than it was in the 50's, 60's, 70's and 80's. We are much more diverse and have a multitude of different cultures represented by our population. Despite a marked growth in so many minority populations, they are greatly unrepresented on the City Council and School Board. Their voices deserve to be heard and they need to be able to contribute to the dialogues we need to make Concord all that it can be.

I promise to help encourage interested members of our many cultures to consider running for office in 2017, thereby bringing their voices to the table.

We must find ways to address the growing homeless crisis as well as the heroin epidemic – both of which have and will continue to impact the way we all live. We must also find serious, thoughtful and lasting ways to address the burgeoning tax increases that threaten to smother our community and way of life.

Finding ways to meld our rich historic past with a solid future is a challenge. However, if successful, it can help to unite Concord and to make all of us proud that we live and work in a prospering and diverse Capital City Region.

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